



Farmers Market Food Safety

Tips to remember:

1. **TOTE BAGS.** Bring your own bags to the market when possible. If they are cloth, wash them frequently. Always keep meat, eggs and dairy products separate from produce. If you are using plastic bags, use only those that are designed for food- not trash can liners.
2. **TEMPERATURE.** Foods such as eggs, cheese and meat need to be kept refrigerated. Do not purchase product from vendors who do not have access to electricity to maintain proper temperature. Eggs should be held at 45 degrees. (Also make sure the shells are clean and not cracked).
3. **ASK QUESTIONS.** Most farmers will gladly tell you about how they grow, store and prepare their products for market. If you are not sure what something is, or how to cook it, ask.
4. **NO SAMPLING!** Don't sample product unless it has been specifically prepared and offered as a sample. It should be clean, dry, and there should be toothpicks or other ways to get a sample without touching other pieces. Many counties require the market/farmer to have a temporary food service license before they can do food tastings. Any exposure to bacteria can make you sick.
5. **WASH** your produce before you eat it. "Locally-grown" does not mean it is clean and ready to eat. Most product has been exposed to dirt, bugs, pollutants, and human hands all along the way.

Product can become contaminated all along the way- the soil, the storage method, environment (insects, birds, wind-borne contaminants) and human hands. Here are a few tips to help you reduce your risk:

- Go to the market as soon as it opens, as early in the day as possible.
 - Wash the products thoroughly under running water before doing any cutting, cooking or eating. Dry with a clean cloth or paper towel. Wash fruits and vegetables that you plan on peeling, too. Bacteria on the outside can be transferred to the inside during the process of peeling.
 - Refrigerate cut or peeled fruits or vegetables within two hours of preparing.
 - Avoid products with mold, bruises, or cuts, as bacteria can hide in these places.
6. PASTERIZED. When purchasing milk and cheeses, buy only the products that have been pasteurized. Bacteria exists in many unpasteurized foods, and can cause serious illness especially in those with compromised or weakened immune systems.